

WILKINSBURG BOROUGH
Council Legislative Meeting
August 6, 2014

CALL TO ORDER

President McCarthy-Johnson called the meeting to order at approximately 7:02 p.m. in Council Chambers, second floor of the Municipal Building, 605 Ross Avenue, Wilkinsburg, PA 15221.

ROLL CALL

The roll was called to establish a quorum. Present were Mr. Lefebvre, Ms. Garrett, Mr. Taiani, Ms. Trice, Ms. Moore, Ms. Grannemann, Mr. Shattuck, Ms. Macklin, and President McCarthy-Johnson. Borough Manager Marla P. Marcinko was also present. Mayor John Thompson was absent. A quorum was established.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Following the pledge of allegiance, a moment of silence was observed to remember victims of violent crime.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jessica Burns – 709 Whitney Ave. – Ms. Burns informed Council that the Wilkinsburg Youth Project will end August 7, wrapping up with planned activities at 748 Wallace Avenue. Forty youth, between the ages of fourteen and eighteen, participated in this work skills training program and each received a \$1200 stipend. Ms. Burns thanked partner organizations for their support, and announced that a picnic is planned at Hunter Park for August 8. President McCarthy-Johnson thanked Ms. Burns for keeping the youth busy. Ms. Burns further noted that a grant application has been submitted for a school-year, after-school mentoring program.

Karen Payne – 1620 Mill St. – Ms. Payne expressed gratitude on behalf of the Wilkinsburg School District for the Borough Council's collaboration to identify a new delinquent tax collector. She offered a special thanks to Kate Luxemburg for her assistance. Ms. Payne noted that she will continue to serve as the chairperson of the committee and also serves on the Finance Committee for the School District.

PRESENTATIONS TO COUNCIL

- Blight Project Summary – 2014 Summer Interns
 - Vivian Fan, Danny King, Charquinta McCray, Jamie Reese

President McCarthy-Johnson read aloud the Declaration of Appreciation to the 2014 Summer Interns for their recommendations to Council to address the issue of blight in the Borough.

The four interns presented a PowerPoint slideshow summarizing their work in the Borough over the preceding 12 months. Ms. McCray introduced herself as a graduate student at Duquesne University, and presented an overview of the research and data sources used to arrive at the recommendations to Council. Ms. Fan introduced herself as a University of Pittsburgh graduate student, and explained the types of information contained in the database created by the interns as well as her desire to see the database continue to be used and updated. During the presentation, the interns noted that they had visited 871 properties and 759 of those were vacant; 723 of the vacant properties are tax-delinquent, and 52% are “underwater”, with delinquent taxes in excess of the property’s value. The number of vacant properties identified in 2014 are not significantly higher than the number identified in a 2009 study, suggesting relative stability despite a soft housing market.

Ms. Reese introduced herself as a University of Pittsburgh graduated student and identified tools that the Borough might consider in the disposition of vacant properties. She noted that Act 90 permits attachment of individual assets for serious tax delinquencies or code violations; it could be used in cases such as the couple who own 14 properties in the Borough with numerous Code violations, but reside in a house in Plum Borough assessed at nearly \$200,000. Mr. King is a graduate student at CMU. He talked about using conservatorship and land banks as tools to address blight, and noted that a Tri-County COG Land Bank is in the formation. The interns concluded with the recommendation that the audience visit the online Blight Library sponsored by the Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania for additional information.

- Citizen’s Advisory Committee on Shade Trees
 - Jeanne Drennan

Ms. Drennan introduced herself and noted that she was accompanied by the arborist Bob Crusan and Michael Hiller from the Nine Mile Run Watershed Association, who were available to answer any additional questions. Ms. Drennan has been working with Ms. Bahn on FAQs about Shade Trees for posting on the Borough website, and found that answers to frequently asked questions sometimes differed from actual practices. The Committee’s goal is to work with Council to ensure equitable solutions for the best possible care of Borough trees; to that end, Ms. Drennan presented two options to Council for review, as she believes current practices create misperceptions among residents. She gave an example of when a tree is struck by lightning, and DPW crews clean up the fallen limbs. Property owners are not billed, so the clean-up has been done with public dollars. The Committee would like to work toward a system wherein only highest priority trees are paid for through public monies and asks that the Borough adopt a policy to exercise financial responsibility for the care of trees. Ms. Drennan noted that members of the Committee would with the Code Enforcement Department to establish a clear determination of what are “public” trees.

Ms. Marcinko noted the large number of trees within the Borough that require maintenance, Council’s position, and budget limitations. As to the confusion surrounding “Borough trees”, Ms. Marcinko noted that Borough trees are located on public property, specifically parks, playgrounds, and Municipal Building property. Other trees are the responsibility of the property owner. She asked if Council wants to assume responsibility for trees that are considered the responsibility of the property owner.

(Mayor John Thompson arrived at approximately 8:00 p.m.)

Mr. Taiani moved, second by Ms. Trice to table the discussion and schedule a work session to continue the discussion.

All voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

- **Wilkinsburg Representatives to the Wilkinsburg Penn Joint Water Authority**
 - **Brenda Joyce-May and Dave Gilliland, Members of the Board**

Ms. Macklin noted the change in leadership with a new Executive Director and new members on the Board of Directors, and concerns with 2 boroughs –Monroeville and Plum – who will be using the Municipal Authority of Westmoreland as their water supplier effective January 1, 2016. Ms. Joyce-May responded that Executive Director Nick Bianchi is very proactive and will be looking at how, from an engineering standpoint, the system will be impacted.

Ms. Macklin suggested that monthly billing has resulted in increased late charges. Ms. Garrett noted that with increased fees, a monthly bill is not really one-third of a quarterly bill. Mr. Taiani added that monthly bills result in increased operational outlays. The question was asked if it is possible to opt out of monthly billing, and did the WPJWA perform a cost benefit analysis prior to initiating monthly billing. Mr. Taiani raised several issues, including the process for meter changes and associated inconvenience to customers, a lack of response from the WPJWA, and overall poor customer service. Mr. Lefebvre noted the lack of a set date for a complete conversion to monthly billing of the entire Borough, while Ms. Marcinko raised concerns about a lack of adequate reporting to the Borough.

AGENDA ITEMS

- 1. Adopting Ordinance No. 2928 – Establishing Handicap Parking Space – 1365 Marlboro Ave.**

Moved: Mr. Lefebvre

Second: Ms. Grannemann

All voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

- 2. Adopting Ordinance No. 2929 – Eliminating Residential Parking – 500 Block of Rebecca Avenue.**

Moved: Mr. Lefebvre

Second: Ms. Moore

Mr. Taiani asked why certain areas are deemed residential parking. Mr. Lefebvre responded that residents don't want restrictions, and recommended that Council formalize a way to establish parking restrictions.

All voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

- 3. Authorizing the advertisement of Ordinance No. 2930 – Establishing No Parking – Laketon Road at Doyle Street.**

Moved: Ms. Garrett

Second: Mr. Lefebvre

All voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

4. Approving Council Meeting Minutes of 07/09/14 and 07/16/14.

Moved: Ms. Moore

Second: Mr. Lefebvre

Ms. Macklin commented that the July 9, 2014 Minutes do not reflect what is contained in her notes.

Yes: Ms. Garrett, Mr. Taiani, Ms. Moore, Ms. Grannemann, Mr. Shattuck, Ms. Macklin, Mr. Lefebvre, President McCarthy-Johnson

Abstain: Ms. Trice

Motion carried 8: 0 1 Abstention

5. Approving July checks issued:

Regular Disbursements 07/01 – 07/31/14	916,484.53
Payroll Disbursements	260,711.03
Voided Checks	<u>(22.11)</u>
Total Disbursement	1,177,173.25

Moved: Mr. Lefebvre

Second: Mr. Shattuck

Yes: Ms. Moore, Ms. Grannemann, Mr. Shattuck, Mr. Lefebvre, Ms. Garrett, Mr. Taiani, President McCarthy-Johnson

No: Ms. Trice, Ms. Macklin

Motion carried 7:2

6. Approving Resolution No. 14-060 – Authorizing execution of PennDOT Winter Maintenance Agreement.

Moved: Ms. Macklin

Second: Ms. Grannemann

All voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried

7. Approving Resolution No. 14-061 – Agreement for the collection of Delinquent Real Estate Tax and Municipal Service Fees.

On motion by Mr. Shattuck, second by Ms. Trice to expedite the execution of the Delinquent Tax Collection and Municipal Service Fees agreement.

All voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

8. Approving Resolution No. 14-062 – Approving professional services for Whitney Park Master Plan.

Mr. Shattuck wanted to clarify that Council oversee a public process to obtain comment.

Moved: Ms. Grannemann

Second: Mr. Lefebvre

All voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

9. Approving Resolution No. 14-063 – Hiring Allan Davis – Driver, DPW.

Moved: Ms. Grannemann

Second: Mr. Shattuck

All voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

10. Approving Resolution No. 14-064 – Street Closure – Rebecca Avenue residents.

Mr. Taiani expressed a concern regarding incidents with parties involving excessive numbers of people, and the need to provide security, as well as parking issues. President McCarthy-Johnson noted that the event only lasts for four hours, and that alternate parking can be found.

Moved: Mr. Lefebvre

Second: Ms. Moore

Yes: Mr. Shattuck, Ms. Grannemann, Ms. Moore, Ms. Trice, Ms. Garrett, Ms. Macklin,
President McCarthy-Johnson

No: Mr. Taiani

Motion carried 8:1

11. Approving Resolution No. 14-065 – Street Closure – WCDC House and Garden Tour.

It was suggested by Ms. Macklin to expand the tour and/or go to different neighborhoods. President McCarthy-Johnson suggested expanding the tour throughout the Borough.

Moved: Mr. Lefebvre

Second: Ms. Garrett

All voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

12. Approving Resolution No. 14-066 – Sponsoring a Banner – advertising Wilkinsburg School District registration.

Moved: Mr. Lefebvre

Second: Ms. Moore

All voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

13. Approving Resolution No. 14-067 – Sponsoring a Banner – Farmer’s Market.

Moved: Mr. Lefebvre

Second: Ms. Moore

All voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

14. Approving Resolution No. 14-068 – Rejecting Bids – Salt Storage Project.

Moved: Mr. Lefebvre

Second: Mr. Shattuck

All voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

15. Approving Resolution No. 14-069 – Adopting Policy for Public Comment at Council Meetings.

Moved: Ms. Macklin

Second: Ms. Grannemann

An advertisement of the policy rules will be posted in the Wilkinsburg Sun.

All voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Taiani asked for an update on the political/commercial signs issue. Ms. Garrett reported that fifty-plus notices were issued, with ten days to correct, and then the Borough can remove the signs. Ms. Bahn noted that thirty-five political signs and sixteen commercial signs were observed, and after the fifteenth of the month DPW can confiscate. Mr. Taiani asked about specifically about Mr. Koger’s political signs, and removal of same.

Mr. Shattuck reminded Council about the August 7 Planning Commission Meeting, which will include a presentation on TRID (Transit Revitalization Investment District).

Ms. Macklin questioned when Council will be meeting with Berkheimer Tax Administrator regarding collection of the Business Privilege Tax. Ms. Macklin asked about a copy of the contract with Berkheimer. A meeting will be scheduled during the first week of September, at the latest.

A progress meeting on the Traffic Study was held on August 5 with the consultants; Marla and staff from the WCDC were in attendance. An initial analysis was provided with recommendations; the consultants were asked to narrow down their recommendations and formalize them into a presentation for a public comment session. The public comment session will be scheduled for the end of September.

Ms. Macklin asked if there has been any progress in obtaining trend statistics from the auditors and the Finance Department. Ms. Marcinko replied that Council was provided with samples of the different

statistical reports recommended by GASB (Governmental Accounting Standards Board) and reports used historically in a CAFR (Comprehensive Annual Financial Report). Council has the responsibility to respond, indicating which statistical reports they would like to see.

Vice-President Moore commended DPW for performing well with their responsibilities, and noted that she would like DPW Roy Clark and his crew to know that their efforts are appreciated. Mr. Shattuck echoed her sentiments, and commented favorably on the now-operational water feature at Hunter Park. Ms. Trice joined her fellow council members in noting the positive difference DPW's efforts have made in the community, and added that plants donated to Wilkinsburg were planted along Robinson Boulevard, Laketon Road and Montier Street. She has received compliments on the maintenance and positive appearance.

Mr. Taiani complained about the early morning (about 2:30 a.m.) trash collection on Thursdays at Kelly School, and wondered if it is a violation of the Solid Waste Ordinance – something that can be referred to the Code Enforcement Department.

Vice-President Moore questioned if the street sweeper is currently working. The sweeper is currently operational, although DPW staff feel that a new machine is needed. Ms. Marcinko noted that the current sweeper is a 2005 model, which is not considered old.

President McCarthy-Johnson thanked Council members for their hard work at the Strategic Planning Session. She described the meeting as very pleasant and noted that a great deal was accomplished.

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Marcinko apologized for the late distribution and explained she had just received the confirmation from Chief Coleman earlier this afternoon on the following two street closure requests:

Approving Resolution No. 14-070 – To Community Life for a Street Closure on August 22, 2014 between the hours of 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. on Meade Street, between the Rite Aid parking lot and the stop sign, for the purpose of holding a back-to-school picnic for Wilkinsburg School District students.

Moved: Ms. Trice

Second: Mr. Lefebvre

All voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

Approving Resolution No. 14-071 – To Pittsburgh Urban Christian School for a street closure on September 6, 2014 between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on Center Street, between Ross Avenue and South Avenue for the purpose of holding a school picnic.

Moved: Ms. Trice

Second: Ms. Grannemann

Mr. Shattuck suggested scheduling a street closure for a ribbon cutting ceremony for the completion of Ferguson Playground on August 31, 2014. He further suggested a ceremony for the installation of the

MAD DAD's Mini-Library on September 6, 2014. He mentioned these events as a chance for good news stories and positive press for Wilkinsburg.

All voted in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

Vice-President Moore announced the following Library Programs:

- Adult basic computer classes beginning September 10, 2014 at 10 a.m.
- The Urban Fiction Book Group, Monday August 25, 2014 at 6:00 p.m.
- Crochet classes every Monday
- The General Fiction Book Group resuming September 24, 2014 at 1:00 pm
- Knitting classes resuming in September, 2014 at Eastridge Branch

She further noted that the summer reading program concludes August 16, 2014, which is also the last day for the summer lunch program. Ms. Macklin asked if the program could be continued until the beginning of the school year. Ms. Moore responded that the program was sponsored by Wilkinsburg Community Ministry and federally funded, so federal guidelines applied.

Vice-President Moore announced that Mercy Behavioral Health will present Mental Health First Aid for library staff and fifteen others on October 2nd, and 3rd, 2014. The program will be four hours each day.

Mr. Shattuck announced a free 3-day "Urban Innovation" program in Detroit that would be valuable for members of the Parks & Recreation Committee and/or the Planning Commission. The conference is September 24-26, and because there is no registration cost, he believed that two people could attend for about \$1,000 to cover travel and hotel costs. He explained there are three overlapping seminars including fun and very easy things to do to activate open spaces and encourage new businesses, which align with Wilkinsburg's plans.

Mayor Thompson announced that the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra is featuring their brass concert series as part of the City of Pittsburgh "Music for the Spirit" Program. There will be three free concerts open to the public, including a program at Deliverance Baptist Church in Wilkinsburg on September 22, 2014 at 8:00 p.m.

Black Women for Positive Change, a national organization, will be sponsoring the second National Week of Non-Violence from August 16-23, 2014. The Mayor is working with neighborhood block clubs and churches to encourage non-violence with young people

ADJOURNMENT

Being no further business, President McCarthy-Johnson adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:17 P.M.

Vanessa McCarthy-Johnson
President of Council